

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-8 remain in the application. Claims 1-8 are subject to examination. Claim 1 has been amended.

Under the heading "Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102" on pages 2-4 of the above-identified Office Action, claims 1-6 and 8 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,137,072 to Martter et al. (hereinafter Martter) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Martter teaches a control panel 10 formed of an outer panel 12. The outer panel 12 must be capable of yielding upon application of a tactile pressure and provides the completion of an electrical circuit (see column 3, lines 22-25).

Disposed along the inner surface 29 of the outer panel 12 is a layer of flexible polymeric film 30 having a circuit 32 formed thereon (see column 3, lines 45-47). The control panel 10 further has a rigid inner panel 35 that supports an electrical circuit 41. Contact between the circuit 32 and the electric circuit 41 occurs when pressure is applied on the outer panel 12 in the area of the circuit 32. The contact results in the completion of an electrical circuit and an input signal is processed. The control panel 10 is attached to an inside wall of a control section or box 15.

The Examiner states that the operating panel 12 of the instant application is read on by the control section or box 15 of Martter and that the control circuit 14 of the instant application is read on by the operating panel 10 of Martter. As noted, column 3, lines 32 to 33 of Martter states that the control panel 10 is mounted within the box 15. As the control panel 10 is inserted into the box 15, the front side of the control panel 10 is receded within the box (see Figs. 1 and 2 of Martter). As shown best in Fig. 2, the control panel 10 is laid against an inside wall of the box 15 and therefore is receded with respect to a front surface of the box 15.

In contrast, claim 1 of the instant application has been amended to recite that the panel front side of the operating panel is adapted to the configuration of the circuit front side such that the circuit front side is either flush with or projects beyond the panel front side. This is clearly shown in Fig. 2 of the instant application and further discussed on page 10, lines 9-15 of the specification of the instant application. As the control module 14 is mounted in the opening of the control panel, the front surface is inherently flush with or projects beyond a front surface of the control panel.

The goal of the invention of the instant application is to

present an operating panel configuration, which is formed of two parts. The first part is an operating panel 12, which can easily be adapted to changes of layout, design and graphical requirements of the appliance. The second part of the configuration is a control circuit 14 wherein electronics, control devices and a display are concentrated. Using such a configuration it is easily possible to modify the layout of the operating panel without the necessity of an expensive redesign of electronics of the control circuit.

Such a possibility is not possible with the Martter taught invention. The control circuit and the operating panel of Martter are formed from a rigid inner and outer panel unit. Therefore, if a modification of layout of the outer panel 10 is desired the corresponding electronics of the inner panel have to be rearranged and redesigned, which is expensive.

In view of the above, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the anticipation rejection based on Martter.

Under the heading "Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103" on page 5 of the above-identified Office Action, claim 7 has been rejected as being obvious over Martter in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0052913 to Yamada et al. (hereinafter Yamada) under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Claim 7 depends from amended claim 1 which is believed to be allowable. Therefore, claim 7 is also believed to be allowable.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claim 1. Claim 1 is, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art. The dependent claims are believed to be patentable as well because they all are ultimately dependent on claim 1.

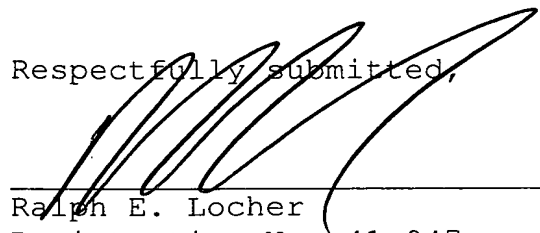
In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-8 are solicited.

If an extension of time is required, petition for extension is herewith made. Any extension fee associated therewith should be charged to the Deposit Account of Lerner Greenberg Stemer, LLP, No. 12-1099.

Please charge any other fees that might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner

Greenberg Stemer, LLP, No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,



Ralph E. Locher
Registration No. 41,947

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Lerner Greenberg Stemer, LLP
P.O. Box 2480
Hollywood, Florida 33022-2480
Tel.: (954) 925-1100
Fax: (954) 925-1101